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DOING THE WILL OF GOD.

IT has been an almost universal judgment of the minds and hearts of men that the world in which we live is neither fortuitous nor aimless. That a universe such as we find this to be should exist by chance, and with no purpose for its existence, is unthinkable. But if there is a purpose for the world, one may well consider whose is the purpose and what the purpose is. The answer of religion to the first question has constantly been that the purpose is God's. To him is ascribed the creation of the world, and the purpose for this creation. As to what the purpose is, many answers have been given. Nearly all of them center about the belief that this purpose is the highest well-being of mankind. As thought upon the meaning of life has progressed from century to century, it has become increasingly clear that the aim of existence is to produce a brotherhood of men who shall be completely good. To this end God's activities seem to have been directed.

To this end also men's activities are to be directed. They have the peculiar privilege of co-operating with God toward the accomplishment of his purpose for the world. Nor *MEN MAY SHARE IN ITS ACCOMPLISHMENT* is this a privilege only, of which men may avail themselves or not as they desire; it is a duty also. The mission of men is to assist God. Only in such assistance does one find his true well-being. In other words, there is but one purpose that runs through all life, and with this purpose all who desire really to live must connect themselves. It is in such

devotion to God's purpose that a man finds self-realization. To isolate one's self from the great purpose of life is to turn aside from the great current which makes for righteousness and goodness, and so to be left stranded. The only real success in life is that which is associated with the fulfilment of God's will in all men and in all ways. If men think they find success in selfish pursuits, or in worldly aims, the time must come for each when his failure will be clear.

If we ask ourselves how we can know what God's will is, in order that we may commit ourselves to its accomplishment, our first reply is made from within our own personality.

*HOW WE KNOW
GOD'S WILL* The religious and moral consciousness supplies to each person an immediate knowledge of God's will, sufficient to guide him into a true understanding and use of life if he will but open mind and heart to the promptings of the indwelling Spirit. We may express our conception of the essential spiritual nature of man in the language of the Old Testament prophet who described man as "made in God's image;" or we may set forth the same idea in other words. But whatever language is used, the fact described is the same, that we partake of the essential divine nature, that we have capacities of a spiritual kind and have spiritual life within ourselves, that man is religious by nature and if he responds to God's voice within he may have communion with God and may share God's wisdom and power. These things are the most certain postulates of our thought.

In addition to this intuitive knowledge, God has blessed men with a most valuable external revelation of his will. The Bible is a record of how God's will has been apprehended by men, having been revealed to them through many persons, through many experiences, and through many events of history. In the Bible we are able to find a genuine revelation of God's will for us. Not, of course, that the Bible is to take the place for us of the religious and moral consciousness within us, but that it is to serve as a most important inspiration and guide to our immediate apprehension of God's will. God has for many centuries been present in his world, making known his purpose and his ways of working, manifesting himself in the thoughts and in the deeds

of men. The sincere seeker after truth therefore is abundantly supplied with the means of knowing God's will, whether he seeks this within his own consciousness, or in the testimony of other men as they have ascertained the will of God.

Pre-eminently God's will was made known to men through the life and the teaching of Jesus Christ. It was his constant thought and statement that he himself came to do the will of God. He found the purpose of his life in accomplishing God's purpose ; and so it was his constant teaching to his disciples that they too must commit themselves to doing God's will. His teaching as to what God's will involved and required was full and explicit. To read the Sermon on the Mount as given in Matthew, chaps. 5-7, is to read the exposition of God's will as Jesus presented it.

But he was concerned not only to show to men what God's will was ; he sought to secure from them an obedience to this will and performance of it. He closed this great discourse upon the will of God for men by a solemn injunction that men should not only know but do God's will. Not everyone, he said, who claims to be a follower of mine, who calls me Lord, and professes discipleship, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but those only who actually do the will of the Father. To know God's will without doing it, to profess to do it when one neglects it, was, to his thought, a complete failure. And we can see why this was so. God's purpose in the world must be accomplished. It is the mission of men to assist to this end. If they refuse such assistance, they have no part or place in its accomplishment.

To the individual the doing of God's will brings complete self-realization. This is a modern phrase, but it means essentially what is meant in technical theological expression by the term "salvation." Salvation is in its root idea health, wholeness. The term is constantly used in the New Testament of physical health or soundness. The term when transferred to the spiritual sphere means complete spiritual well-being. Now the complete spiritual well-being of

the individual can be attained only when he so relates himself to God that the power and goodness of God may work in him a perfect manhood. In recent years we have perhaps come to a larger perception of the gospel idea of what perfect manhood means. We have struggled against ascetic ideas which taught that the negation of self and the shutting out of life was the ideal to be sought. As against these lingering false views we now appreciate the meaning of Jesus when he says "I have come that ye may have life, and may have it abundantly." God's will to us as revealed in and through Christ is not a series of negative commands forbidding many things and emptying life of any positive content. Instead, God's will is a call to the fullest personal achievement. He bids men to realize the possibilities that he has implanted within them; they are to be the best and to do the most that lies within their power. The ideal life is one of high character, noble service, and great achievement. To do God's will is therefore to remove from one's life all that is selfish and unholy. But this is not enough. To stop there is to fall short of God's purpose. One must go on from that point to fill one's self with the positive qualities of the ideal life. So that the result of doing God's will is, to the individual, self realization, salvation, true well-being.

But this is only one of the two great results which follow. The other result of doing God's will is that a contribution is made toward the accomplishment of God's purpose in the whole world. To secure one's own individual salvation is but half of one's duty and privilege; the other half is to secure the salvation of mankind. The gospel summons us to promote the social well-being, to make humanity better and happier, to enthrone love, righteousness, and peace. So we are turning with a clearer vision and a greater energy than ever before to securing that God's will be done among men. Social service, ministry to others, work for the common good and a world ideal, now promise as never before an increasing realization of God's purpose.